

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY 2022 – SUE CAPLET

Greetings legislators. Thank you for the opportunity to add my voice to this legislative budget process.

My name is Sue Caplet and I am a registered voter. I want to add my voice to support ANNUAL funding increases for non-profit HUMAN service agencies in CT. I work at Reliance Health, Inc in Norwich, a non-profit agency that has for 45 years provided mental health and addiction services to people in the greater Norwich area. My role at Reliance Health is Property Manager and it is from this role that I would like to express my concerns about the financial needs of our agency.

Most of Reliance Health's funding comes from the Dept of Mental Health and Addiction Services and some additional funding from other state agencies. I started working at Reliance Health in 2005 and for the next two years celebrated the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) that was added to our grant funding from DMHAS. However, in 2007 there was no COLA and then none for the next 10 years. Fast forward to 2017 when the state budget was in deficit and our agency was told to cut our budget by 5%. There continued to be no COLAs for the next 4 years bringing us to 2021.

During those 14 years of no grant funding increases, as a Property Manager I have seen costs increase in numerous areas as our agency maintains our 18 properties. Sixteen of these properties are residential sites where our clients live in the local community instead of being residents of a state hospital at vastly more cost. The other two of these properties are busy sites with client services and administrative offices. Property upkeep each year costs more because labor costs and materials continually increase. We have to maintain and improve roofs, structural problems in old buildings, septic systems, wells, decks, drain pipes, furnaces, kitchens, bathrooms, appliances, plumbing, electrical, and fire systems. Aging properties need MANY ongoing repairs.

One example is one of our "newest" properties, a residential home that is a mere 30 years old. Last year we had to replace the furnace which was on its last leg and the back deck which was rotting and unsafe in many places. And most of our properties are far older than 30 years old, some are over 100 years old.

All this is to say that besides not keeping pace with the cost of living in employee salaries and health insurance, we are not keeping pace with increased costs in property upkeep. There are so many costs to running an agency like ours. Our grant budget is about \$13 million/year and to keep pace with the current rate of inflation of 7% in 2022, we would need an additional \$910,000 for this year.

Once again a CT governor has ignored non-profits in the proposed budget. It is very discouraging to know that people are testifying year after year but elected officials do not seem to understand how DESPERATE this situation has become for non-profits. We hear much about the need to fund important infrastructure such as roads and bridges. Our agency IS part of the state's important infrastructure for PEOPLE providing indispensable health services. I truly hope this year there are not just words, but ACTIONS to increase funding EVERY year to non-profit agencies.